

**SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OUTREACH AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE**



PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Outreach and Public Affairs Office

as at:

Thursday, 26 January 2012

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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The New Dawn (Liberia)

Thursday, 26 January 2012

Taylor's CIA Link - The Globe Lied

Othello B. Garblah



The Boston Globe, a New York Times Company newspaper, has admitted that its report quoting US Defense officials as confirming that ex-President Charles Taylor worked as a hired US spy agent lacks evidence.

“The article was not based on adequate reporting and drew unsupported conclusion...the agency offered no such confirmation,” Mr. David McCraw, Vice President and Assistant General Counsel of the New York Times Company said in a letter to Mr. Taylor’s lawyer Wednesday.

“The Globe had no adequate basis for asserting otherwise and the story should not have run in this form,” an editor’s note published Wednesday along with the letter addressed to Courtenay Griffiths said.

When this paper contacted The Globe’s Editor Martin Baron via email Wednesday to confirmed whether his paper had retracted the story, directed this writer to the link where the said editor’s note was published, saying “It was published here...”

The Globe in its Tuesday January 17, 2012 edition under the caption (“Former Liberian Dictator Charles Taylor Had US Spy Agency Ties”) reported that US Defense Department officials had confirmed “what has long been rumored” that Taylor worked with US spy agencies during his rise as one of the world’s most notorious dictators.

In his letter to Courtenay Griffiths QC, on Wednesday January 25, McCraw said the paper arrived at this conclusion after a careful review of the article by its editors and concluded that the said article was not based on adequate reporting.

In an editor’s note published on its website with the letter addressed to Mr. Taylor’s lawyer, The Globe admitted that the said article on the Taylor’s CIA link drew unsupported conclusions and significantly overstepped available evidence when it described Mr. Taylor as having worked with US spy agencies as a “sought-after source.”

“The story, based on a response by the US Defense Intelligence Agency to a long-pending records request from the Globe, described the agency’s response as having “confirmed its agents and CIA agents worked with Taylor beginning in the early 1980s.”

But the agency offered no such confirmation; rather, it said only that it possessed 48 documents running to 153 pages that fall in the category of what the Globe asked for - records relating to Taylor and to his relationship, if any, with American intelligence going back to 1982. The agency, however, refused to release the documents and gave no indication of what was in them," paper said in its retraction published Wednesday.

The paper adds that "one of the grounds for that refusal was suggestive, citing the need to protect "intelligence sources and methods," but that, by itself, fell well short of a sufficient basis for the published account.

There has long been speculation that Taylor had such a role, speculation fueled in part by Taylor's own suggestion in trial testimony that his 1985 escape from prison in Plymouth, Mass., may have been facilitated by CIA operatives. But Taylor, now standing trial before a UN special court on charges of rape, murder, and other offenses, denies he was ever a source for, or worked for, US intelligence."

The Full Text of the Editor's note below:

For the record: Story overreached in calling Taylor intelligence source

Editor's note: A front-page story on Jan. 17 drew unsupported conclusions and significantly overstepped available evidence when it described former Liberia president Charles Taylor as having worked with US spy agencies as a "sought-after source." The story, based on a response by the US Defense Intelligence Agency to a long-pending records request from the Globe, described the agency's response as having "confirmed its agents and CIA agents worked with Taylor beginning in the early 1980s."

But the agency offered no such confirmation; rather, it said only that it possessed 48 documents running to 153 pages that fall in the category of what the Globe asked for - records relating to Taylor and to his relationship, if any, with American intelligence going back to 1982. The agency, however, refused to release the documents and gave no indication of what was in them.

One of the grounds for that refusal was suggestive, citing the need to protect "intelligence sources and methods," but that, by itself, fell well short of a sufficient basis for the published account. There has long been speculation that Taylor had such a role, speculation fueled in part by Taylor's own suggestion in trial testimony that his 1985 escape from prison in Plymouth, Mass., may have been facilitated by CIA operatives. But Taylor, now standing trial before a UN special court on charges of rape, murder, and other offenses, denies he was ever a source for, or worked for, US intelligence.

The Globe had no adequate basis for asserting otherwise and the story should not have run in this form.

Daily Observer (Liberia)

Wednesday, 25 January 2012

Welcome Back, Britain!

The announcement Monday by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf that the government of the United Kingdom will shortly reopen its embassy near Monrovia is very good news indeed!

Nine years ago Liberia was at war with itself and with others. At the onset of that war, 1990, the First Secretary of the British Embassy in Monrovia told the Daily Observer in a conversation in Freetown, Sierra Leone, that if Charles Taylor did not cooperate with the international community and stop the killings he would become an international pariah.

In his blind ambition for absolute power, Taylor did not. He went on slaughtering people and causing, in time, other warlords to do the same. Then he took the war to Sierra Leone and to Guinea. He signed and abrogated one peace agreement after another and did not rest until he was practically handed the presidency in 1997, following elections on an uneven playing field.

But just as predicted, Taylor did indeed become an international pariah. Look where he is now. Later in 1990 the British, to the sadness of many Liberians, closed their embassy in Monrovia. We are positive that Charles Taylor did not care.

But the Daily Observer, since our return to the market in June 2005, has been pleading the British government to reopen their embassy in Monrovia. There is one solid and resounding historical reason why. Liberia was the first sovereign African republic with which Great Britain, under its eminent monarch, Queen Victoria, established diplomatic relations. The year was 1848 when the British Monarch invited President Joseph Jenkins Roberts, Liberia's first President and the first democratically elected African President, to Buckingham Palace for an official visit.

On his return, Queen Victoria, ruler of the seas at that time, generously presented President Roberts a vessel to take him back home.

Liberian diplomats, including the eminent historian and statesman, Edward Wilmot Blyden I, were the first African diplomats to serve at London's Court of St. James.

Yes we had out bouts with imperial Britain and France, over boundary quarrels on the Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ivorian sides, but relations between the two nations, Britain and Liberia, remained cordial.

The diplomatic ties reached their pinnacle when in 1961 Queen Elizabeth II invited President and Mrs. William V.S. Tubman to pay a state visit to Britain. It was a rainy morning in London, but Queen Elizabeth held an umbrella over President Tubman in her open carriage en route to Buckingham Palace. Later, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh paid a return state visit to Liberia.

When in July 1971 President Tubman died in the London Clinic following prostate surgery, Queen Elizabeth gave a Royal Air Force plane to fly Mrs. Antoinette Tubman, the President's widow, and her party, along with his remains, back to Liberia.

A few years ago President Sirleaf, too, paid an official visit with Queen Elizabeth.

Britain has played a substantial role in Liberia's development, and this first African republic has cooperated with Britain, the United States, Germany, France and other Western nations in buoyant and mutually rewarding international relations.

Just last week, in our editorial commending the Americans on their magnificent new embassy in Monrovia, the Daily Observer reechoed the Liberian people's longing for the return of the British Embassy in Monrovia.

The news of the embassy's return is, therefore, welcome news indeed!

We pray that the British Embassy in Liberia will, at long last, make it unnecessary for Liberians to travel to Abidjan and elsewhere to obtain visas for visits to Europe.

Africa Review (Kenya)

Thursday, 26 January 2012

Sirleaf to appear before committee to 'confess' her civil war role



Liberia's President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has opted to come clean over her role in the country's civil war.

Over the years innuendoes have circulated about her sponsoring the National Patriotic Front of Liberia of former warlord Charles Taylor, who is facing possible conviction before the UN-backed Sierra Leone Special Court sitting at The Hague.

Mrs Sirleaf is now promising to appear before the Leymah Gbowee committee set up last year to address pre-election abuses. The president she was ready to "challenge the untruths" about her civil war role.

Last year's highly disputed presidential election that saw Mrs Sirleaf win a second and final term revealed a deeply divided nation. It was partly to confront this that the president appointed the committee headed by Nobel laureate Leymah Gbowee.

"I am prepared to be the first to appear before it, to say what I have already said, to challenge untruths, to say what I have done and what I have not done, and to demonstrate that no one is above this process of healing and truth-telling," she declared.

At the end of the Liberian civil war a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was set up which came up with a number of recommendations. Among them were the banning from active political life of key players of the time, including Mrs Sirleaf herself.

She has come under intense pressure locally to implement these controversial recommendations.

Truth-telling

The Independent National Human Rights Commission (INHRC) of Liberia, tasked with the implementation of the most important aspect of those recommendations, has itself been undertaking similar reconciliation programs.

As part of this, officials of the commission intend to launch what the government calls 'Palava Hut Programme' similar to Rwanda's 'gachacha' traditional court system set up to untie the judicial bottlenecks caused by the 1994 genocide cases.

The 'Palava Hut' entails confession and forgiveness-seeking through a traditional conflict resolution mechanism. It will take the form of community discussions and, says the INHRC, will derive legitimacy from a host of cultural influences.

According to President Sirleaf, the Leymah Gbowee reconciliation committee would also seek to provide an independent platform for truth-telling.

"It will provide an independent platform for Liberians, irrespective of the social, economic, political, and geographic orientation, to address past abuses, reconcile fractured relations and communities," she said.

She added: "To guarantee our peace, we must do more to unite our people. Liberia is today a nation at peace, but not yet at peace with itself. Our journey of national healing is under way, but it is not complete. To claim the future, we must reflect and heal the past."